OXFORD CONFERENCE STUDY SERIES

based on

The Message and Reports of the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

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PREFACE TO THE SERIES

For more than a quarter of a century the Christian churches have been drawing together. The impulse given by the great Missionary Conference of Edinburgh, 1910, has borne fruit in two parallel movements: one concerned with the life and work of the Church, the other with its faith and order. These movements culminated in two great conferences, held in Great Britain in the summer of 1937. The first, which was held in Oxford in July, took place under the auspices of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work and had for its subject CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND STATE. It was the successor of the Stockholm Conference of 1925, which inaugurated what has come to be known as the Life and Work Movement. The second was held in Edinburgh in August of the same year under the auspices of the Continuation Committee of Faith and Order, a body which owed its initiation to the Lausanne Conference of 1927. Both Conferences united in recommending to the churches the creation of a World Council of Churches which should carry on the work now being done by the two movements separately.

The Oxford Conference was concerned primarily with the relation of the churches to the world outside, the Edinburgh Conference with their relation to one another. Each considered a number of important questions and made weighty recommendations which concern the churches as a whole. In order to facilitate the study of these recommendations by churches and educational institutions two sets of studies are being prepared: one dealing with Oxford, the other with Edinburgh. The present series, six in number, will be based upon the findings of Oxford. The users of each pamphlet (study) are urged to read the entire text of the report contained in it before commencing the study outlines.

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SALIENT FEATURES OF THE OXFORD CONFERENCE

A most impressive feature of the Conference was the way in which, from the start, it sensed and grappled with the problem of religious freedom in the face of the growing totalitarian state. This was dramatized at the first session when it was announced that for reasons growing out of the internal situation in Germany no representatives of the Evangelical Church of that country would be present. (*) The Conference was deeply moved by this fact and in sending its greetings to the German Christians who were to have shared in its fellowship it crystallized a sentiment that was to be dominant throughout the sessions. The Conference felt that it was meeting under the shadow of a pagan secularism expressing itself in the forms of exaggerated nationalism, imperialism, fascism, and atheistic communism. There was special concern over the way in which the place of religion is usurped by nationalism and racialism and the extent to which the youth to whom the churches would offer Christian culture are being regimented in anti-Christian states.

A major emphasis in the deliberations of the Conference, which appears in the reports, was the disintegration of modern society, the collapse of standards, the disappearance of time-honored sanctions, and the waning of spiritual authority on the part of the Church itself. This mood of crisis and a corresponding urgency toward redemptive action was felt at Oxford from beginning to end.

Not only did the Conference characterize the present era as one of disintegration but it diagnosed contemporary evils as due to the secularization of the spirit and outlook of humanity. Again and again it was proclaimed that humanism, the elevation of man's power and authority to the level of the divine, was responsible for the present condition of society. Thus the ascription to the state of supreme power and the construction of utopias as means whereby man engineers his own salvation—or, to use the phrase of our continental fellow-Christians—the emergence of the "demonic" —were deplored as responsible for the collapse of human values. (What they mean is man's tendency to assign infinite values to certain finite movements.)

Over against this judgment upon human perversity and depravity was the constant emphasis on the sovereignty of God. The divine will was exalted in contrast to the human; the holiness of God was set over against the sinfulness of man. Again and again it was said that our salvation was due to the divine benevolence, not to any intrinsic worth of man.

This judgment upon man's unworthiness led to a mood of repentance and confession which was continued throughout the Conference. It furnished

* At the last moment passports had been denied to the delegates chosen by the German Evangelical Church.

a major theme for the services of worship which were held morning and evening in old St. Mary's Church, where the undivided Western Church had worshipped for five hundred years before the Reformation. Confession was made not only for individual delinquency but for corporate sin, for the failure of the Church to be true to its own witness and to stand against the materialistic drift of contemporary life.

It was in these services of worship that the real experience of unity was found by the Oxford Conference. The delegates went to their plenary sessions in the old Town Hall and to their several sectional meeting places to grapple with problems of theology and social ethics and to face what seemed the almost impossible task of reconciling conflicting views which rested upon widely different, often upon contrary, philosophic assumptions. But out of the confusion, and perhaps at times impatience, engendered in these discussions they returned to St. Mary's for worship to find that Anglicans, Lutherans, Eastern Orthodox, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, and all the rest, could worship together and participate in common aspirations, a common repentance, a common intercession and a common dedication. It was at St. Mary's, the delegates agreed, that the *Una Sancta*—the universal Christian fellowship—was realized in fact.

This experience culminated in an inter-communion service celebrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury with which the Conference was brought to a close. It was the first time that an Anglican prelate had administered communion at a great public service of worship to Free Churchmen together with members of his own faith.

The central place of the Church itself in the deliberation of the Conference was unmistakably clear. It was said by a careful observer who was a member of both conferences that there was more discussion of the Church at Oxford than at Edinburgh. This was because the Church was the starting point for Oxford in every one of its studies: the Church and the Community, the Church and the State, and so on, through all the problem areas explored.

It should be noted that the Youth Commission, while it issued no report for publication—indeed, was not asked to do so—made a report to the Conference upon its deliberations which not only revealed the same concern as did the other reports but—and this was most surprising—showed an even greater conservatism. (This illustrated the relatively great interest in Europe in purely theological questions.)

The most concrete outcome of the Conference was the adoption of a proposal for the merger of the Life and Work and the Faith and Order movements in a World Council of Churches, a plan which was transmitted to the Edinburgh Conference and there adopted for submission directly to the churches.

One of the ways in which ideas are spread is through new terms. If we in America are to appreciate the central drive of the Oxford Conference, we must learn the meaning of a word hitherto little used among us—namely, the word "ecumenical." It means world-wide, and as applied in the deliberations at Oxford and also at Edinburgh it signifies "concerning the whole household of the faithful," meaning the entire Christian Church in conscious fellowship. It is a more inclusive term than "Protestant" which because of its negative character and its limited reference is not in favor among those who are working for world-wide Christian unity. The Eastern Orthodox churches, which form so large a part of the movement are, of course, not Protestant. Also, in the Anglican churches, and in a considerable section of the Episcopal Church in America, the word "Protestant" is not in common use. Moreover, while the Church of Rome declined to send official delegates and sent only "observers," the world conference leaders were very desirous that it should not appear that the conferences were anti-Roman. In spirit Oxford and Edinburgh envisaged an ecumenical fellowship from which no Christian body should be excluded.

INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Among those who came to the Oxford Conference, and to its Section on Church and Community, were two persons with widely different expectations. One was the executive of a Federation of Churches in one of the largest American cities. The other was a distinguished professor in a Swedish theological seminary. Each brought pressing problems, seeking specific help upon them.

The American's imagination was haunted by the realities of crime, unemployment, housing, immorality in a great metropolis; he hoped for very pointed pronouncements from the Conference as to the Church's responsibility for the life of his community.

The Scandinavian's mind was burdened by the heroic struggle of Christians in neighboring Germany against the claim of their State, made on behalf of the National Community, or *Volk,* to complete domination over their life and faith. He could be satisfied with nothing less than an explicit statement by the Conference of Christianity's view of the rightful significance of National Community.

The American had barely heard of *Volk*—the most burning single issue for European Christianity today. The Swedish professor, coming from a nation of towns and villages under enlightened socialist administration, could not have the vaguest comprehension of the tragic conditions of American city life.

This suggests one of the first difficulties confronting this, or any, world conference of churches—the amazing differences in the issues which trouble Christians in different parts of the world, and the inevitable ignorance of one group about the most pressing problems among fellow-Christians elsewhere.

But it also illustrates a deeper difficulty—in the contrasted views held by Christians having different traditions and living in different situations—regarding the way in which Christianty understands and should aim to meet the same problems. To be sure, in this instance, the confusion was aggravated by the fact that the key-word, *Community,* actually bears radically different meanings for different peoples. To Americans "community" usually suggests a neighborhood or locality and the people who dwell there—a loose association of people within a certain geographical proximity. To consider the relations of "Church and Community" is to have in view the innumerable concrete problems of health, education, social life, public life, public morals, local politics and so forth.

But we also use the word with a wider reference and are coming to do so increasingly. We speak of the "Jewish National Community" or, even more significantly, of the "Christian World Community"; and then we have in view a more intangible but more profound union of people

who are widely scattered geographically but are bound together by ties of race or history or common loyalty. It is in this latter sense only that German-speaking Christians use the word *Community*. To them "community" or *Volk* signified the nation or race or "people" into which one has been born and to which, therefore, one belongs inescapably and permanently through common blood, heritage, custom, and historic kinship. They believe that *Community* is "an order especially created by God for the preservation of the heritage of the past, the nurture and training of the successive generations, and the maintenance and improvement of the common life of men." Like the family to which it is nearest akin, it rightly claims obedience and loyalty from all. "Duty to *Volk* is in the last analysis duty to God."

Now, however strange such a view may sound to American ears, it is the most powerful force in the lives of millions of men today, most notably on the continent of Europe but also in Japan, India, and South America, for it is the root conviction which underlies the recrudescence of passionate nationalism everywhere. Without sympathetic understanding of it, American Christians cannot enter into fellowship with Christians elsewhere. More important is the fact that without some grasp of the origins, development, and present hold of this "gospel of Community" and of the Christian attitude toward it, it is impossible to plan intelligently the mission of Christianity to the world of today.

At first thought, it might appear that the planners of the Oxford Conference had made a serious mistake in bulking under a single heading, "Church and Community," such diverse matters as the social sores of metropolitan life and the theological conception of *Volk*. But as the Section pursued its work, it became clear that the American executive and the Scandinavian professor were troubled not by two unrelated problems, but rather by two aspects (some would say, the practical and theoretical aspects) of a single larger and all-embracing issue—the Christian view of God's intention for the great corporate realities of mankind's life (neighborhood, nation, race, people, humanity), and the relationship which individual Christians and Christian churches should hold to each.

It was with this vast complex of theories and concrete problems (all that we mean when we speak of the relation of Christianity to Society, and very much more) that the Section on Church and Community was occupied. The task of the Section broke naturally into four parts:

1. An analysis of the existing situations in the relations of Church and Community throughout the world, and of the forces and factors which have produced these situations. The purpose of this study was to gain a fuller and profounder understanding of the problems.

2. An examination of underlying convictions regarding Christianity's relation to the common life, convictions which control practical attitudes that Christians take, and on which there is serious divergence of view among

Christians. Here the purpose was to confront frankly the crucial issues on which Christians divide, especially the three following questions:

a. What is the significance in God's purpose of the great organic corporate relationships which are features of human life in every age and among every people—family, race, people, nation?

b. What, if any, responsibility has the Church for the control and transformation of these great social realities?

c. How far is the Christian law of love to be taken as a practicable ideal for community relationships and individual action?

3. A declaration of the position the Church should take upon the two most serious issues in its relations to current community life—the conception of National Community, or *Volk,* and the problem of Race. Here the effort was to reach a clear and unanimous statement of Christian conviction which might guide earnest but confused churchmen throughout the world.

4. A charting of lines for immediate advance by the churches. Here, the aim was concrete practical proposals, for both study and action, which might command the active loyalty of all sincere Christians at once.

I. CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

The report, after receiving the approval of the section, was submitted to the Conference, substantially in its present form. The Conference received the report, referred it back to the section for revision in the light of the discussion, and commended it to the serious and favourable consideration of the Churches. The report was revised by the section and approved by it in its present form.

I. THE WORLD TODAY

The Christian Church is called upon to fulfil its mission to-day amidst a distraught and disunited mankind. Divisions and conflicts there have always been. But the foundations of communal life in generally accepted systems of customs, social distinctions, moral and cultural values, religious beliefs have remained sufficiently firm to preserve the essential structure of the various communities in which men have lived their lives together. To-day, however, as probably only once or twice before in human history, the foundations themselves are shaken. Traditional pieties and loyalties and standards of conduct have lost their unquestioned authority; no new ones have taken their place. As a result the community life of mankind has been thrown into confusion and disintegration. Though more marked in some sections of mankind than in others these facts are in some measure universal. This social disunity is reflected in the life of the individual man or woman, whose personal destiny is largely bound up with his relation to the community. When society "goes to pieces" the individual tends also "to go to pieces," in suffering, frustration, and a baffled sense of the futility and meaninglessness of his existence.

In many countries vigorous attempts are being made to restore social unity by drastic control and regimentation and by making national or class unity the supreme good to take precedence of all else. These bear witness to the truth of what has just been said and to the primal need of human life as God has made it for community and fellowship.

In the midst of such a world, torn and disrupted, and feverishly seeking a way out of its troubles, the Church of Jesus Christ has to teach its message and fulfil its task. What is it to say? How is it to act? What are individual Christians to believe and to do?

II. THE CALL TO THE CHURCH

The Church is under obligation to proclaim the truth that the disintegration of society has one root cause. Human life is falling to pieces because it has tried to organize itself into unity on a secularistic and humanistic basis without any reference to the divine Will and power above and beyond itself. It has sought to be self-sufficient, a law unto itself. Nor is there any hope in the ascription of sacred quality to nation or State or class. A false sacred, a false God, merely adds demonic power to the un-

redeemed passions of men. Through bringing about temporary and local unity it prepares for mankind an even worse and wider conflict. The recall to God in penitence must stand first.

Yet how shall men know who and what God is, and what it is of which they must repent, and in what new direction they must walk and whence they may find strength to walk therein? The answer to these questions God Himself has given in the revelation of His will, and supremely in Jesus Christ. In God is the secret of true unity amongst men and in Christ is revealed the secret of God. The first task of the Church, now as always, is to make known the Gospel, and to assert the claim of Jesus Christ, as the incarnate Word of God, to the lordship of all human life.

The modern world, however, has never been wholly without the preaching of the Gospel. Dare we ascribe its present plight solely to its wilful rejection of the Word of life and of the things which belong to its peace? Nay, is not the modern situation God's call to a Church* which has been content to preach the redeeming Word without the costly redeeming deed? Has it taken the trouble to make plain to itself or to the world the meaning of its redeeming Word for the daily life of mankind? What reason has the Church given the world to believe that it has the secret of true community in Him whom it preaches and whom it professes to serve? The life of the Church is deeply infected with the very ills from which humanity suffers. The divisions and the conflicts of mankind have been reproduced and even justified within its own borders. Again and again Christian groups have persecuted and sought to destroy one another, and with equal guilt have persecuted men of other faiths; and this is still happening to-day. The Church's recall of the world to the feet of Christ must be preceded by the recall of itself. The Church is under call to confess its sin and to seek anew from God forgiveness and the cleansing of its life.

But there is peril in these general propositions, true as they may be. The call to Christians to repent and submit their lives anew to God in Christ has to be obeyed in the midst of the concrete realities of the common life, where decisions have to be taken and acts with all their irrevocable consequences done. Perplexities and problems at once arise. They press the more heavily the more earnestly the Christian believer seeks to bring everything in his life into the obedience of Christ.

The difficulties arise in the main because the Christian finds himself called upon at every point to act in relation to systems, or frameworks, of life which partake of both good and evil; they are of God and yet also of human sin. The orders of family, community, people, nation are part of the God-given basis and structure of human life, without which the individual would have no existence at all; yet man's sin, his pride, greed, fear, idolatry has infected them all. Hence the Christian who has seen the perfect will of God in Christ and would serve that will in the midst of his fellow-men

*In this document, where the Church as an institution is referred to, organized Christianity, and not the Una Sancta, is meant.

finds himself in perpetual tension and conflict. He accepts thankfully his community in order to live and to work in it and for it; yet if he would work in it and for it for Christ he must be in continuous protest against it.

The difficulty of deciding how far in partcular instances the Christian should go in co-operation with ways of life which are in greater or less degree contrary to God's will is often great; and the danger of self-deception is always present. No general principle of guidance can be laid down. That the ways of the community or nation may reach such a pitch of evil that there is no option for the Church but to repudiate them altogether, and even at times refuse co-operation with them, can hardly be questioned in view of contemporary events, but just where that point is must be left to the guidance of the Spirit. This must be said, however. The Church is under obligation never to lose sight of its one supreme calling to bear costing witness, in deed as well as in word, to the higher way of life in Christ. Where it must join in what it feels to be a partial approach to the perfect will of Christ it must keep its spirit sensitive and humble by continual acknowledgment before God of the sin of mankind which is wresting the gifts of God to evil ends, and in which it is itself implicated. This is the tragic and continuous tension between the pure ideals of the Kingdom and the unredeemed community of men in which it has to live and bear its witness. But so soon as it seeks peace by becoming unconscious of that tension then it is traitorous to its Master and Lord.

Three problems in the Church's relation to the community to-day urgently demand attention.*

1. The Church and the National Community (*Volk*)

The Church comes to men never as isolated individuals. Every man is born into a specific national community, and is united to it by strong ties. The Church regards this fact of nationality, in spite of its infection by human sinfulness, as essentially a gift of God to mankind.

The love of the Christian for his people should therefore be part of his gratitude to God for the riches which are his through the community into which he has been born. The primary call on the loyalty and service, both of the Church and the individual Christian believer, will be, as a rule, the community in which God has set him. Every Church should regard itself as a Church for the whole people. This means that it accepts its place in the community life and acknowledges its responsibility, along with all other Christian bodies, to reach all members of the community, in relation to every aspect of their life, with the pure message of the Gospel. It does not mean that it subordinates itself to the national life.

As with every divine gift, the gift of national community has been and is being abused by men and made to serve sin. Any form of national egotism, whereby the love of one's own people leads to the suppression of other nationalities or national minorities, or to the failure to respect and

*The fuller draft of the sections immediately following, as they appear in the long report, is given on pages 15-26.

appreciate the gifts of other people, is sin and rebellion against God, who is the Creator and Lord of all peoples. Even more, to see in one's own nation the source and standard of saving revelation, or in any way to give the nation divine status, is sin. This is to be utterly repudiated and irreconcilably opposed by the Christian conscience in the name of God, and for the sake of the nation it is called to serve. Further, the Church is called to be watchful that these evils, or the world-views by which they are supported, do not enter within its own life, destroying its fellowship and corrupting the pure Word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which has been entrusted to it.*

2. The Church and Race

Even deeper are distinctions of race. The existence of black races, white races, yellow races is to be accepted gladly and reverently as full of possibilities under God's purpose for the enrichment of human life. And there is no room for any differentiation between the races as to their intrinsic value. All share alike in the concern of God, being created by Him to bring their unique and distinctive contributions to His service in the world.

Here again, however, the gift can be, and is, abused. The sin of man asserts itself in racial pride, racial hatreds and persecutions, and in the exploitation of other races. Against this in all its forms the Church is called by God to set its face implacably and to utter its word unequivocally, both within and without its own borders.

Moreover, it is a first responsibility of the Church to demonstrate within its own fellowship the reality of community as God intends it. It is commissioned to call all men into the Church, into a divine society that transcends all national and racial limitations and divisions. In the services of worship, in its more informal fellowship, in its organization, and in the hospitality of the Christian home, there can be no place for exclusion or segregation because of race or colour. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, for ye are all one in Christ." To allow the Church's lines of action to be determined by racial discrimination denies the Gospel whose proclamation is its task and commission.

3. The Church and the Common Life

There's an urgent call to the Church to-day to reestablish close relationships with the common life of the people in the midst of which it is called upon to work. The Word of God must not only be preached: at any cost it must be made actual. Indeed only as it is thus being made actual can it be said to be completely preached. To-day men are often more apt to criticize the Church than to criticize Christianity; this is due in no small part to the fact that the Church has lost touch with the everyday activities and problems which fill men's lives. To the outsider the Church

*In view of the immediate urgency of this problem a supplementary declaration is appended on page 14.

appears to be a society of people interested in a specialized activity which does not need and does not engage the interest of all. Religion is just one activity among many for those who are inclined that way. Men see no necessary relation between the moral struggles of society and the Gospel of Christ. The Church is not wholly to blame for this situation, since many spheres of the common life in which it once took the leading part have now been taken over by the community or by the State. But these changes only challenge the Church to seek new areas and new means for the redemption of the common life.

III. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

There is a call from God to-day—

1. To every local congregation, to realize at any cost in its own self that unity, transcending all differences and barriers of class, social status, race, nation, which we believe the Holy Spirit can and will create in those who are ready to be led by Him.

2. To different Churches in any district, to come together for a local ecumenical witness in worship and work.

3. To all Christians, to a more passionate and costly concern for the outcast, the under-privileged, the persecuted, the despised in the community and beyond the community. The recrudescence of pitiless cruelty, hatreds, race discrimination (including anti-Semitism) in the modern world is one of the major signs of its social disintegration. To these must be brought not the weak rebuke of words, but the powerful rebuke of deeds. Thus the unity of the Church is advanced. The Church has been called into existence by God not for itself but for the world. Only by going out of itself in the work of Christ can it find unity in itself.

4. More specifically to the Church, to extend its concern to the particular areas of life where existing conditions continuously undo its work and thwart the will of God for His children, such as: misunderstanding between old and young, tension between men and women, health, housing, employment recreation in both their distinctive rural and urban forms. Thus the Church seeks to express God's concern for every man in his own neighborhood and vocation.

5. To the Church, to undertake new social experiments, especially in local communities, through which the general level of conscience may be raised.

6. To the Church, to play a healing and reconciling part in the conflicts, misunderstandings, or hatreds which arise between interests or classes within the local community or the nation.

7. To the Church, to encourage authoritative study of mooted problems in such areas as race and industry, and to draw together Christians of different races and groups for united study, fellowship, and action.

8. To Christian men and women in the same vocation or industry, to

meet together for prayerful discussion as to how in their particular sphere of the common life the problems which arise can be dealt with as God would require.

9. To members of the Christian Church to be ready to undertake responsibilities in local and national government. The Church should seek to guide and support these its representatives in their efforts to solve the problems by which they are faced in the light of Christian principles.

10. To all Christians, to seek by simplicity and discipline in personal living to go beyond the accepted standards of the community in the love revealed in Christ.

Finally, there is laid upon the Christian Church in all lands the obligation to create and to foster solidarity and co-operation with one another which are stronger than all the divisions which now disrupt the family of mankind. The ecumenical movement which has found expression in the Conference at Oxford should become an integral part in the life of every Church, every local congregation, every individual Christian. To help to create it, to support it, to develop it is a solemn responsibility to God who so loved the *world* that He gave His only-begotten Son for its sin. Thus shall be plainly manifested to mankind in its chaos and division something of that peace and order of brotherly love which come only from God and from Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord.

SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT *(See note on p. 11)*

1. "God wills all men to be saved." Therefore He has in Christ come to us, and therefore He has established His Church amongst us to proclaim the message of salvation through Christ for all nations. The Church has the only all-decisive source for its message about God and His will in the revelation of God in Christ.

2. As Christians we consider our membership in a distinct Community (*Volk*) as a divine gift. The love of a Christian for his people is also his gratitude towards God for the gift thereby given to him.

3. In order to fulfil its task the Church takes its place in the Community (*Volk*) wherein human life is lived. This does not mean the subordination of the Church to the national life, but the effective fulfilment of its task to reach all members of the Community with the Gospel pure and undefiled.

4. Every kind of national egotism, where the love of one's own nation leads to the suppression of other nationalities (minorities), is sin and rebellion against God, the Lord of all nations.

5. The deification of one's own people is sin against God. "Thou shalt have none other God but me." To see in one's own people (in one's own blood) the saving revelation of God is anti-Christian. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved."

Because of its importance and interest the following part of the long report of Section I on Church and Community is included. This longer draft was not voted on in full detail by the Conference although it was approved by the Section.

a. Community and "the Orders"

The Church discovers each person, never as an isolated individual, but always enmeshed in a web of organic corporate relationships which surround his life in concentric circles of ever widening radius—his family, his neighborhood, his race, his people, his nation, all humanity. To these powerful organic structures or relationships which are continuing features of human life in every age and among all peoples the Germans give the name *die Ordungen,* "the Orders"; their nature and their true significance in the Christian understanding of life is one of the most disputed issues in contemporary Christian thought.

Each relationship conditions and molds both the life and the thought of every person in greater or less measure, usually in more subtle and pervasive ways than he realizes. Each makes invaluable contributions to his existence, and in return lays upon him obligations to loyalty and service. For Christian faith, each in its true expression is, in some sense, a part of the divine order, part of God's gracious provision for the enrichment of man's life. But there is conflict between their respective claims. Much more important for Christian faith, each is forever tending to make demands upon the Christian in conflict with his duty to God. Like every individual, each of the great corporate societies or "orders" of human life is always infected with the sins of pride, fear, idolatry, greed, and insularity. They are always partly God-inspired, partly sin-infected and therefore "demonic" in their claims. In consequence, the life of each Christian is *always* in tension between the illegitimate demands (usually exaggerations or pervasions of legitimate demands) of the various "orders" upon him and the demand which alone rightly claims his unqualified devotion—that of the will of God. Hence spring many of the most perplexing problems of the Christian's life in the world.

The most intimate and meaningful of these societies or "orders," and much the most rightful in its demands, is that of *family,* for to it each person owes not only his very existence but all the gifts of early nurture and protection. Its ties are biological, not merely cultural or historical or accidental or sentimental. Indeed so universal is the recognition of the profound claims of family that each of the wider societies or "orders" seeks to appropriate for its own claims the same advantage by presenting itself to men as the "larger family." Thus members of lodges, fraternities, clans and nations, as well as churches, call each other "brother" and "sister" in their efforts to lay upon the individual the obligations of family loyalty. Yet the demands of the family itself may be, and often are, in unresolvable conflict with duty to God and therefore "demonic." Hence Jesus' stringent injunction, "Unless ye hate father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, ye cannot be my disciples." (Luke 14:26)

The relationship or "order" next after family in the enrichment of the individual and his consequent loyalty to it may be the *neighborhood* in which he dwells, or a particular *society* or *organization* or *communion* of which he is a member. (For, as a human institution, the Church is one society or "order" among others, making its contribution and claiming its loyalty as they do, and like them forever in danger of infection by sin, thus becoming "demonic.") Or, the society or "order" of next strongest claim may be the individual's *people* or *nation,* or even *humanity.* In any event, these latter and wider corporate realities each make their contribution to him and lay their claim upon him—the people or folk to whom his life is bound by profound ties of common heritage, custom, experience and, it may be, blood; the nation-state of his residence; the race of his birth; and the great body of mankind which the Christian by faith recognizes as the company of the sons and daughters of God—his Father's family upon earth.

It is in the relative importance of these societies or "orders," in the legitimate or "demonic" character of their respective claims, and especially in the true relation between his duty to them and his sovereign duty to God that many of the Christian's most poignant perplexities lie. It is here that some of the most serious misunderstandings among Christians today arise.

The difficulty is intensified because there is no single set of terms by which the different relationships or "orders" are uniformly understood in different parts of the world. But that is not merely a defect of language. The difficulty in language is a revelation of the problem, not its cause. It is due to the deeper fact that the relationship which each of these terms designates and which is set forth in its dictionary definition has markedly different meanings and associations in different parts of the world. And, since the practical reality is not the abstract relationship, but the *meaning* of the relationship—the actual grip which it has upon whole peoples—we have to do not merely with confusion of terms but with different realities. Therefore it must be recognized first that none of the most familiar terms —community, nation, people, *Volk,* race—various forms of which are frequently employed interchangeably, are precise equivalents. Second and more important, it must be recognized that *each* of these terms is differently understood by different sets of people and *means* different things to them. It is these various meanings which must be understood if discussion is to be fruitful.

For example, each of these wider corporate realities—neighborhood, organization, church, people, nation, race, humanity—may be designated as a *community.* But concerning their relative significance as *communities* there is wide difference of view. Thus a European writer defines a *community* by contrast with an *association.* An association may be defined by the purpose for which it is constituted. It is formed for particular ends such as trade, recreation, study, mutual security. As a rule its membership is voluntary; an individual may disassociate himself from one association and join himself to another. But a *community* is a corporate reality of a very different kind. It is the whole of a people living continuously together in one

area when, as such, they share a common social life and form. It is something to which one is born, not something which one chooses to join. Its ties are those of historic origin, not those of pragmatic usefulness. It is a natural growth rather than an artificial creation. Its purposes are too many and too indefinite to be enumerated and all of them together do not fully explain its existence or its character. Its cohesion is largely subconscious and semi-instinctive and it is more lasting than that of an association. Its fellow feeling and the purposes it subserves are not the cause of its members' living together but rather flow out of that.

Yet there is not a single element in that definition of "community" which is not refuted by corporate realities in various parts of the world which are undoubtedly communities. In the United States, the most frequent meaning of "community" is not "the whole of a people," but "a segment of the people living in geographical proximity," a neighborhood. The Jewish people do not "live continuously together in one area" but are scattered over the face of the earth, yet feel themselves one community; and the same might be said of the British Empire. The Swiss national community shares several languages and cultures. The American people is a community into which many of its members were not born but which they chose to join; its ties are less those of historic origin than of pragmatic usefulness. Many modern nations with a deep sense of community are less "natural growths" than "artificial creations." Of some of them it must be said that "its fellow feeling and the purposes it subserves *are* the cause of its members' living together," and not the reverse. For increasing numbers of Christians, the *Christian world community* which possesses no geographical locus, no tangible structure, no unity of language or uniformity of custom, is a reality of far greater meaning and authority than the innumerable local, racial, and national communities which have traditionally claimed human devotion.

In brief, the one essential condition of a community is that its members should feel themselves to be a social whole, that is, that they should feel themselves to be a community. For community, the reality is constituted by profound awareness of common interest or affection or loyalty or aspiration and not by factors of racial kinship, historic association, geographical propinquity or shared experience. These factors may be precedent; they may be derivative; they may be nonexistent.

Much the same thing may be said of the inner realities which bind a people together into a *nation* and which quicken the consciousness of obligation and debtorship. In the United States, where unity proceeds from no identity of race or blood, no long historic continuity of life and custom, no great body of common folkways, but from a common ideal rather than a common history, it is the nation-state to which loyalty adheres. In central and eastern European countries, in recent years especially, there has been a mighty resurgence of loyalty to *Volk* (a term for which there is no precise English equivalent, the closest parallel being perhaps "people"), loyalty to the corporate reality to which one belongs by deep historic association and

racial kinship, by which the heritage of the past is continued and the common life sustained, and which, it is maintained, is the "order" established by God next in importance to *family* for the nurture and discipline of man. In Great Britain loyalty is given to "king and country"—a reality intermediate between the American nation-state and the continental *Volk*. And there are other variations among other peoples. Here, likewise, a nation is a nation because its members feel themselves to be so and, consciously or implicitly, are resolved to remain so.

Again, with regard to the hold which national ties take upon the loyalties of members, there is the widest diversity. At one end of the scale are peoples in whom the rebirth of the sense of nationality has lately come as a profound and shattering vital experience to which all else must be related, like a volcanic eruption in whose glow the whole landscape is lit up. At the other is the people of the United States, which is and feels itself a nation but has no single common blood, language or culture and for which a common soil is only a recent acquisition. Again, for a Frenchman himself, and for understanding him, it is obviously far more important that he is a Frenchman than that he is a Gascon or a European. With a Briton, it is less obvious whether it is more significant and matters more that he is British or that he is Scottish, Welsh or English. With a French Canadian it is far from clear whether he is primarily French, Canadian, British or American; and with a recent immigrant from Europe to the United States, whether it is his old or his new nation to which he most belongs.

b. The Church and National Community (*Volk*)

The problem of *community* is given a special setting and urgency at the present time by the crucially central place which the reality of *Volk* has come to have in the thinking of many peoples, especially the German-speaking peoples of the continent of Europe. It must be clearly grasped that the word *Volk* is, strictly speaking, quite untranslatable into English just because it designates both a sentiment and a body of convictions to which there is no exact or even approximate parallel elsewhere. (The Japanese philosophy and practice of emperor worship reveals analogies to political nationalism but not to the sentiment of *Volk*. The British sentiment toward the crown has points of kinship but is supported by no such mythical and metaphysical structure.) As Professor Ernest Barker writes:

Our word "community" is a multicolored word. It has many areas of operation. The German word *Volk* is a unitary word. There is one *Volk*, though it may have two different manifestations according as we are thinking of the *Volk* already included in the boundaries of the German state or of the broader *Volk* which transcends those boundaries. . . . None of us can use the word "community" with the simple intensity with which the German uses the word *Volk*. When we think of the realities of Church and community, we are thus thinking of something different from the relation of *Kirche* and *Volk*.

Because of its great importance for Europeans today, Christians everywhere should make special efforts to come into an understanding of the inner meaning of *Volk*. It is thus described by a competent authority:

Volk is not an institution, but a living personal community of a super-individual kind. The elements by which it is constituted, viz., identity of blood, occupancy of the same territory, possession of the same language, customs, history and culture, etc., are of different strength at different times. *Volk* is best understood on the analogy of the family. It stands for common descent in the spiritual and physical sense of the word. It has to be distinguished from society, class, mass, nation and state. It is not a sum of individuals, or a collective compound, but as it were a living being of community life. *Nation* means *Volk* or the population viewed in its political aspect. The German conceives the *state* as the instrument to form and keep the people a continuing and growing force. *Volk* is an organic thing; *state* an organization.

Although this recrudescence of passionate loyalty to *Volk* seems to many people today a new and strange phenomenon, it has its roots deep in history, indeed in Christian history. It has been a central issue in the relations of Church and community for fifteen centuries. It first presented itself as a problem for Christian thought and life when missionaries carried Christianity to the barbarian tribes of northern Europe in the fifth and following centuries. Though, through Judaism, Christianity itself had tribal and national affiliations, it had grown up under the Roman Empire and had shaped itself in a world imbued with imperial culture and presuppositions. But the empire was breaking up, and the barbarians already had their own tribal religions, linked with all phases of the common life of the tribe. To a large extent the missionaries adapted themselves to this pattern and Christianity was domesticated to tribal and national loyalties. Since that day the life of the Church has reflected the tension in Europe between imperial and national ideas, between the relatively rational, civilized and sophisticated ideals of *homo sapiens* and the more primitive, intimate, unreflective group loyalties of the natural man. The Reformation marked the triumph of nationalism. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, under the influence of rationalism and humanitarianism in the secular world and of the missionary movement and the ideal of the world-wide community of Christians in religion, the intense and exclusive ties of national loyalty were somewhat relaxed in favor of universalism in both politics and religion. Today they are again clamant.

Thus the true place of national community or *Volk* loyalty in the life of the Christian, and the true relation of the Christian Church to these natural and powerful societies, has been a mooted but unsettled issue throughout the greater part of Christian history. We here confront not merely the personal problem of conflict between claims of community and duty to God. There is the far deeper issue of the place which these "orders" or societies are believed to hold in God's wider purpose for all mankind. In this matter Christians are not fully agreed. But there is unanimity as to the following basic principles.

The Christian attitude toward national community or *Volk* must depend in the first instance on the place Christians assign to it in the divine economy. The starting point is the double recognition already noted—nation or *Volk* is always at once both God-given and sin-infected. The Christian is called upon to accept and rejoice in the fact that God has chosen to set men in various races, peoples and nations, with different manners and styles of life. That each nation seems to have its distinctive contribution and mission to the world is to be ascribed to God's purpose. The ties of common blood, soil, tradition, culture, and purpose which constitute the national community are by nature enormously strong. They are given of God who creates the individual life in and through the life of a specific community.

On the other hand, it must be said with the greatest emphasis that, as with every divine gift, the gift of nation has been and is being abused by men and made to serve sin. Any form of national egotism whereby the love of one's own people leads to the suppression of other nationalities or minorities, or to failure to respect and appreciate the gifts of other people, is sin and rebellion against God who is the Creator and Lord of all peoples. The history of every nation is defaced by national crimes; every nation has its distinctive excellencies. More fundamental still, even the best things in national life have in them an element of sinful self-assertion and self-glorification, of indifference and contempt for "the lesser breeds without the law," and of the will to lord it over them. Everywhere in the life of nations and peoples these two elements have been and are at work; it is not possible to disentangle them and to say with confidence, "This is the work of God" and, "This is the work of the devil." But to see in one's own nation the source and standard of revelation, or in any other way to give the nation divine status, is utterly sinful.

Thus the Christian attitude toward nation or *Volk* will be twofold. The primary call on the loyalty and service of both the Church and the individual believer is as a rule to the community in which God has set them. The love of the Christian for his people should be part of his gratitude to God for the riches which are his through the community into which he has been born. Each generation has inherited from the past a distinctive ethos and culture by which its own mind and character have been shaped. Of this it is a trustee rather than an owner. It is its duty to preserve that inheritance and to transmit it unimpaired and if possible enhanced to posterity. Every church should regard itself as a church for the whole people, not in the sense that it would subordinate itself to the national life but in the sense that it accepts its place in the community and acknowledges its responsibility, along with all other Christian bodies, to reach all members of the community with the Christian message.

But the obligation both of Christian and church is rather to loyalty than to obedience or conformity—and loyalty itself sometimes requires vigorous opposition to the general will. The prophets of Israel constantly withstood, rebuked and prophesied against their own people and their constituted authorities; that is why they were stoned. In doing so they transgressed no

patriotic duty. Rather, they themselves were the true patriots because they spoke and acted not in "abject submission" to the "occasional will" of their nation but out of a deep and true insight into the things that belonged to its peace. So, likewise, Jesus spoke out against the evils in national and *Volk* life in sharp and unsparing denunciation. While the Christian Church in any country consists predominantly of the members of the people of that country, it has a unique character in that it is based on conscious allegiance to God in Christ and its center is beyond this world. It has its own distinctive task of witness and worship which for its members constitutes an imperative transcending all others. To submit to interference in its performance would be apostasy; it would be to obey man rather than God. In addition, it can view folkways and national claims from a perspective unavailable to others, in the light of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, and it must maintain thereby a prophetic and critical outlook upon the national life as a whole. More particularly, where nation or *Volk* is deified or made supreme over all other peoples and all other claims, this pretension must be utterly repudiated and irreconcilably opposed both by the individual Christian conscience and by the Christian Church in the name of God. Further, the Church is called to be watchful that such sinful pretensions, or the world views by which they are supported, do not enter within its own life, destroying its supernational fellowship and corrupting the pure word of the Gospel which it is called upon to preach.

Thus far all Christians may agree. To this extent they may, and should, present a united and powerful witness concerning both the positive validity and the "demonic" pretensions of the claims of nation or *Volk*. But beyond this large and important area of agreement there are serious differences of conviction. As we have noted, they have their roots far back in history. And they cannot be said to arise wholly from theological divergences as to the place of nation or *Volk* in the divine economy. It is only too apparent that, through the whole of Christian history and not least today, they have been strongly colored by political exigencies and loyalties; Christians have tended to favor that view of the divine significance of nation and *Volk* which most readily supported the political interests of their own people.

To some, it appears that national community or *Volk,* like the family to which it is akin and to which it stands next in the divine economy, is an order especially created by God for the preservation of the heritage of the past, the nurture and training of the successive generations and the maintenance and improvement of the common life of men. Any weakening of its demands upon individual loyalty and obedience is a blow not only to social stability but to the very structure of morality and religion. Duty to *Volk* is in the well-nigh absolute. To others, it seems that the semi-instinctive and subrational emotions of *Volk* loyalty come down from primitive and precivilized levels; they appeal to all that is parochial, bigoted, and fearful in man and their continuance is a device of conservative forces to preserve the status quo and block progress. A radical emancipation from their hold upon individual sentiment and obedience is essential for growth into the wider and more inclusive loyalty to the body of humanity. Excessive deference

to *Volk* is in the last analysis apostasy to God who, as Father of all mankind, intends every person to come into the reality of the universal brotherhood of his children. The central issue is thus clear. It is the relation, in the divine plan, of loyalty to the narrower but more intimate and intense bonds of community or *Volk,* to the wider but more general loyalty to the whole family of God's children. Is that more limited loyalty God's special provision for human nurture and discipline next to family in legitimate obligation, or is it a persistence of tribal feeling from which men should be freed in order to realize the divine commonwealth? Is that wider loyalty an abstract humanitarianism masquerading under Christian aegis, or is it the ultimate fellowship toward which God ever seeks to lead his unwilling children? This is an issue urgently requiring concerted Christian study.

c. The Church and Race

A special problem of critical urgency today is that of the relations between peoples of different races. Here all of the deep human loyalties and prejudices which are present in both lofty and demonic form in all phases of the common life—pride in ancestry and heritage, dislike of alien peoples and unfamiliar ways, tension between more advanced and less advanced cultures, fear of contamination and desire for opportunity, economic greed and economic need—come to most extreme and dangerous expression. And there are in addition deep-seated antipathies and apprehensions peculiar to race relationships. The roots of the problem are deep and difficult of treatment. No simple or easy solution is possible. It is all the more imperative that Christians have a clear and firm grasp of the Christian truth concerning race, the nature of the present situation and the Christian's responsibility for action.

For Christians, the starting point in this as in every problem of the relations of men is the affirmation that all men are by birthright children of God created in his image, and therefore brothers and sisters to one another. They are, moreover, "brothers for whom Christ died," and are intended by God to be brought within the fellowship of his one true Church.

Each of the races of mankind has been blessed by God with distinctive and unique gifts. Each has made, and seems destined to continue to make, distinctive and unique contributions to the enrichment of mankind. All share alike in the love, the concern and the compassion of God. Therefore, for a Christian there can be no such thing as despising another race or a member of another race. Moreover, when God chose to reveal himself in human form, the Word became flesh in One of a race then as now widely despised. Christ himself selected as the supreme illustration of the charity he enjoined upon his followers a member of a hated and outcast people—outcast because they were of mixed blood (the good Samaritan). For Christians, alien or outcast peoples claim special regard.

Each race is rightly grateful for its own heritage and possibilities. Apparently, each desires to preserve its own identity. What it chiefly desires of other races is not opportunity for intermarriage, but recognition of its

dignity within the family of mankind and opportunities for education, for significant vocation, and for social intercourse within the common life. As to the desirability or undesirability of widespread admixture of races, the authorities are sharply divided. This is a matter which Christians and scientists should give determined study. It must be noted, however, that such mixture of less advanced and more advanced peoples as has occurred has been mainly due to the initiative and often to the violence or fraud of the latter. Further, there is today, apart from certain primitive peoples, no such thing as a "pure race." The assumption by any race or nation of supreme blood or destiny must be emphatically denied by Christians as without foundation in fact and wholly alien to the heart of the Gospel.

The problem of the relations of the races is found today chiefly in two situations: within a nation where large numbers of two or more races dwell together and between nations of different races. In either situation, the problem may arise between races of relatively equal culture or between markedly more and less advanced peoples. It is to be noted that the problem *within* nations is most acute where, as in North America, the minority were first introduced into a country by violence and at the instance and solely for the benefit of the people which now denies them social equality; or, as in many parts of Africa, Asia and Australia, where the dominant people themselves are an alien minority; or, as in the case of the Jewish nation, of a people forcibly exiled from their homeland who were originally often welcomed for what they could contribute to the dominant nation's welfare. In the first two instances especially the predominant motive was economic exploitation and aggrandizement. In brief, the most acute situations today are largely due to movements of population initiated by white and so-called "Christian" nations for their own advantage. Individual Christians and their churches bear a heavy guilt.

The gravity of the problem cannot be exaggerated. Both within certain nations and on the wider scale of the world-wide relations of the races, catastrophe is hardly to be avoided without clear-sighted and courageous action. It seems doubtful if it can be avoided in any event except through the wisdom and power of religion. In this task, the Christian Church is called to play a major, it may be a decisive, part; and every Christian has a twofold responsibility—as a citizen and as a member of the Church of Christ.

The concrete forms of the problem vary widely in different communities and lands. There is no single or simple solution. But there are certain principles which Christians everywhere should seek to have incorporated in the sentiments and public policies of their nations and communities. Among these are:

1 The recognition of the value of every human being as a person.

2 The right of every person, whatever his race, color or present status, to the conditions essential for life as a person; to education; to opportunity in his vocation, recreation and social intercourse.

3 Full participation in fellowship and leadership for members of a less advanced people as they prove their ability.

4 Active cooperation and fellowship among leaders of different racial groups.

5 Recognition by the community of its responsibility to less privileged persons of whatever race or group, not only for their assistance and protection but also for special educational and cultural opportunities.

6 The necessity of such economic and social change as shall open the way to full opportunity for persons of all races.

However, it is as members of the Church of Christ that Christians bear the heaviest guilt for the present situation. And here is their greatest obligation and opportunity:

The first need is that the deepest inner attitude of every Christian toward persons of other races be completely transformed by the gracious gift of God into conformity with the mind of Christ. Persons of all races should become, to the Christian, sons and daughters of God, differing in color, in native endowment, in custom and outlook, but of one brotherhood in God's love and so, by God's grace, in the affection of the Christian. It is a standing rebuke to Christians that this attitude has in fact been more fully realized in some secular and non-Christian movements than within the churches. Such an inner transformation is to many Christians one of the richest gifts of God in which they greatly rejoice. It is a gift which every Christian should possess and which God waits to bestow on all who will receive it.

In the second place, Christian congregations are infected in their attitudes and practices by the same prejudices, fears, distortions of truth and exclusions as those which create the race problem in the secular community. But it is a first responsibility of the Christian Church to demonstrate within its own fellowship the reality of community as God intends it. It is commissioned to call all men into the Church, into a divine society that transcends all national and racial limitations and divisions. In its services of public worship, in its more informal fellowship and in its organization, there can be no place on any pretext whatever for exclusion or compulsory segregation because of race or color. "In Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free." The congregation or communion which allows its line of action to be determined by such racial discrimination denies the Gospel whose proclamation is its task and commission.

Third, in the Christian home there can be no barriers or discriminations because of race color or social status. It is to be recognized that such a course may involve difficulties and raise apprehensions lest such intimate social intercourse lead to unwise marriages which would oppose unfair handicaps on later generations. Yet with all its difficulties it will be gladly undertaken by the Christian in confident loyalty to the free and gracious fellowship of Christ's brethren.

Fourth, against racial pride, racial hatreds and persecutions and the

exploitation of other races in all their forms, the Church is called by God to set its face implacably and to utter its word unequivocally both within and without its own borders. There is special need at this time that the Church throughout the world bring every resource at its command against the sin of anti-Semitism.

Finally, Christians both in their private lives and in their churches should take the lead in developing greater sympathy for those in need because of unequal opportunity, those who are excluded by prevailing community customs and sentiments, those who suffer persecution, anger and spite because of their race. They will seek to bring it about that each racial group is judged by its best representatives and by the worthiest contributions it has made to the life of humanity. A conscious and constant effort should be made to resist the fears and suspicions which tend to arise from unlikeness and to cultivate friendship and cooperation in all undertakings that are of common concern in the life of the community. Here Christians must expect to sacrifice popularity in loyalty to Christian insight and love.

STUDY ONE

THE PRESENT SITUATION

STUDY: Report on Church and Community:

"I. The World Today" (page 9).

"II. The Call to the Church" (page 9).

(If the complete text of all the Oxford Reports is available read also:

a. Report on Church and Community, longer draft, Sections 1-3.

b. Report on Church and State, II. 2, "The Present Situation with Reference to Church and State."

c. Report on the Church and the Economic Order, Part II, "Analysis of the Present Economic Situation."

d. Report on the Church and Education, III. "Factors in the Present Situation."

e. Report on the Universal Church and the World of Nations, I. "The Present Situation.")

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. After reading carefully as many of the above references as are available, draw up a summary of their total analysis of the existing situation.

2. Submit this summary to critical examination. How far is it true? Where is it exaggerated or one-sided? What would you add or omit? Now prepare your own analysis of "the present situation."

3. "The disintegration of society has one root cause" (Section II, paragraph 1). How does the Report define this cause? Do you agree? What other causes, if any, require mention? Compare the diagnosis of the causes of the present situation in the other Reports.

4. "The answer . . . God himself has given" (Section II, paragraph 2). How does the Report describe that answer? Do you agree? What further should be said, if anything, on this subject? Compare carefully the answers in the other Reports and in the Message of Oxford. Now, state the answer to the present plight of the world in your own words.

5. "The life of the Church is deeply infected with the very ills from which humanity suffers" (Section II, paragraph 3). Illustrate specifically. How far does this "infection" disqualify the Church for significant service to the Community? What is involved in the "call to its own repentance" which the Oxford Conference repeatedly urged upon the churches?

STUDY TWO

WHERE CHRISTIANS DIFFER

STUDY. REPORT ON CHURCH AND COMMUNITY:

"II. The Call to the Church" (page 9).

(If available read also the longer draft of the Report on Church and Community, Section 4.)

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

On three basic questions concerning relations of Church and Community, Christians are sharply divided:

1. What duty has the Christian Church toward the general social life of the world? 2. Are Christian individuals and groups obligated to exemplify the law of love in their own practice at all costs? 3. What is the place in God's purpose of nation, race people, etc.?

We shall discuss the first two questions in this study and the third in the two following studies.

1. What duty has the Christian Church toward the general social life of the world? Three alternative answers are given:

a. Christians should seek to bring all social life into conformity with the mind of Christ.

b. Christians should seek to bring social life under the control of principles of justice, but the Christian ideal of love is not a practicable guide.

c. Social relationships are so deeply infected with human sin that they cannot be brought under control of any ideal standards. The most which can be done is to erect temporary protections against ever-threatening chaos. This should be the Christian's aim.

Reach a thorough understanding of each of these views, especially any unfamiliar or uncongenial to you. What is your own answer, as a Christian, to the question?

2. Are Christian individuals and groups obligated to exemplify the law of love in their own practice at all costs? This is the harassing problem of compromise. Two alternative answers are given:

a. Christ's commandment, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," is to be literally obeyed. Conscious compromise is inconsistent with sincere discipleship.

b. Human finiteness, the complexities of social life, the necessity of joint action with those who do not accept the Christian ideal, moral defect—all these make the full application of the law of love impossible. Compromise is inevitable.

Study these alternative views carefully and then give your own answer to the question. As guide-posts the Report points out:

1). These two views have been held by sincere Christians in every age.

2). Much of what is often called "compromise" is inherent in man's finiteness and therefore not blameworthy.

3). Men's natural attraction is to conformity: against this they must be unremittingly watchful.

4). Even when men have done their best, they must confess themselves "unprofitable servants."

For further study: The forthcoming Oxford volume, *Church and Community,* chapters by M. Bjorkquist, H. Lilje, S. Zankov, and M. H. Boegner.

STUDY THREE

CHURCH AND NATION *(Volk)*

STUDY: LONGER REPORT ON CHURCH AND COMMUNITY:

"a. Community and 'the Orders.' "

"b. The Church and National Community (*Volk*)."

Read also "Supplementary Statement" (page 14).

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Study carefully subsection (a) until you feel your mind gripped by the conception of "the Orders." Was this conception familiar to you previously? How important is it for an understanding of human society? of the relations of Church and society? Are "the Orders" widely recognized in American thought? Have we a substitute or alternative conception?

2. Now study subsection (b) until you fully understand the idea of *Volk.* What light does the brief historic survey throw on the present strength and validity of the idea of *Volk?*

3. Examine the "Supplementary Statement" in the Report. This was originally drafted by the German-speaking members of the Conference. It indicates the way in which they would define the problem and the Christian attitude toward it.

4. "The Christian attitude toward national community or *Volk* must depend in the first instance on the place Christians assign to it in the divine economy" (page 20). What in your view is that place?

5. 'The central issue is . . . the relation, in the divine plan, of loyalty to the narrower but more intimate and intense bonds of community or *Volk,* to the wider but more general loyalty to the whole family of God's children" (page 22). Is this the central issue? Compare carefully the two views contrasted in the final paragraph of subsection (b). Make a discriminating appraisal and judgment on these two positions.

6. What, if any, is the American equivalent to the idea of *Volk?* In what forms do similar issues present themselves to American Christianity? What should be the policy of the churches in this country toward them?

STUDY FOUR

THE CHURCH AND RACE

STUDY: Report on Church and Community:

"2. The Church and Race" (page 12).

Longer draft: "c. The Church and Race" (page 22).

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

Here we meet the problem with which Americans *do* have first-hand acquaintance. Nowhere is it more flagrant and urgent.

1. "For a Christian there can be no such thing as despising another race or member of another race." (page 22). What, for Christians, is the significance of the fact that Jesus Christ was a *Jew?* What does it imply for the Christian attitude toward Anti-Semitism? What is the significance of Jesus' selection of a *Samaritan* for his illustration of brotherliness?

2. "There is today, apart from certain primitive peoples, no such thing as a 'pure race.' " (page 23). What does this mean for the Nazi claim of race-purity? What does it imply for *all* pretensions of race superiority?

3. "The most acute situations today are largely due to movements of population initiated by white and so-called 'Christian' nations for their own advantage." (page 23). Is this historically accurate? If so, where does it lodge responsibility for the racial tensions of mankind? What does it imply in obligation upon the white races?

4. "There are certain principles which Christians everywhere should seek to have incorporated in . . . their nations and communities." (page 23). Consider these principles one by one. Work out in specific detail what is involved in having each incorporated in the sentiments and policies of your community. Develop a comprehensive program to accomplish the total task.

5. "In its services of public worship, in its more informal fellowship and in its organization, there can be no place on any pretext whatever for exclusion or compulsory segregation because of race or color." (page 24). How far do American churches, does your church, fulfil this standard? If it is to become not merely an ideal but a reality, what must be accomplished in your church? in the churches of America? in the Church of Christ in the world?

SUGGESTED READING

on

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Douglass, Harlan Paul. **The Church and the Changing City.** Institute of Social and Religious Research, New York, Harper Brothers, 1927. $2.50.

Douglass, Harlan Paul, and Brunner, Edmund deS. **The Protestant Church as a Social Institution.** Institute of Social and Religious Research. New York, Harper Brothers, 1935. $2.50.

Hallenbeck, Wilbur. **Urban Organization of Protestantism.** Institute of Social and Religious Research. New York, Harper Brothers, 1934. $1.50.

Sanderson, Ross W. **The Strategy of City Church Planning.** Institute of Social and Religious Research, New York, 1932. $2.00.

Sears, Charles H. **CITY MAN.** New York, Harper Brothers, 1936. $1.50.

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